

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and mapper apparatus for reallocating bandwidth used by a data tributary comprising data units, during transport of the data tributary over a communications link by a time division multiplexing (TDM) frame (e.g., a SONET frame comprising  $N \times \text{STS-1s}$ ) from a source device to a sink device. Each the data unit occupies one time slot of the frame and the data units are encoded to differentiate between payload data and control codes. At the source device, a designated code (IGNORE CODE) is inserted in each unallocated time slot to identify that the time slot contains no payload data (the designated code being ignored by the sink device). New set(s) of time slots to be allocated (i.e., to increase bandwidth) or de-allocated (i.e., to decrease bandwidth) to the tributary are determined. The new set(s) of time slots are communicated to the sink device. Confirmation of the communication is received from the sink device.

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